

THE ACQUISITION LIFE CYCLE OF A SOLDIER

MAJ Matthew T. Riordan

Introduction

The Lockheed Martin Orlando [FL] Program Support Team (PST) oversees the U.S. Army Multi-Purpose Individual Munition/Short Range Assault Weapon and the Target Acquisition Designation Sight/Pilot Night Vision Sensor Programs. The PST, along with its military Program Integrator, recently participated in the 3-day U.S. Army Greening Program at Fort Benning, GA, home of the Army Infantry and Airborne School. The Army Greening Program supplements the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) certification process and provides hands-on, operational experience to Acquisition Workforce members. “Greening” refers to placement of civilians in a military operational environment.

Day 1

On the first day of the program, the PST met soldiers who had been in the Army for 2 days or less! The team learned about the indoctrination of new recruits and how the Army provides them

medical shots, clothing, and housing. In addition, the PST was briefed on the 14-week initial training program conducted by the Infantry Training Brigade. Later that morning, the team observed soldiers practicing hand-to-hand combat and hand-grenade training.

In the afternoon, the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the U.S. Army Pathfinder School took the PST to the field to observe pathfinder training in progress. Pathfinders are trained to maneuver on the ground and to secure and operate landing sites for multiple aircraft. Just as the PST arrived, the instructors issued a “FRAGO” (fragmentation order) to the pathfinder student team. The Army developed the FRAGO as a quick method to update the current situation and assign a new mission.

The pathfinder student team was required to plan, coordinate, rehearse, and configure a load that could be lifted by helicopter (called a slingload) within 2 hours. As scheduled, two UH-60 BLACK HAWK helicopters arrived and successfully picked up the pathfinder team’s gear

on a slingload under the aircraft. Additionally, the helicopters picked up the soldiers. The PST departed the field site on a “deuce-and-a-half” (2.5-ton truck) and a “hummer” (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV)).

Day 2

The second day began with formation at 0450. After this early start, the PST marched to the physical fitness field with the airborne students while they loudly sang cadence. Everyone paused at the sound of reveille at 0600. The team then joined the students in their physical fitness training. This was all before 0730!

Next, the PST observed soldiers load an Air Force aircraft for an actual parachute jump. While the aircraft’s engines idled, each team member was allowed to board and watch the airborne students prepare for their first jump. To get the feel of jump preparations, PST members also donned parachutes. The airborne cadre explained to the PST the behind-the-scenes operation of buying, packing,

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and repairing parachutes and providing quality assurance. Finally, the PST met members of the Silver Wings, an elite free-fall parachute team, and received explanations of how a parachute works and the details of advanced airborne training.

Day 3

On the final day, the PST watched airborne students fall with an open parachute from the 250-foot tower. This activity provided students an opportunity to experience the effects of wind on the parachute with the guidance of an airborne instructor on the ground.

Next, the PST observed advanced rifle marksmanship training performed by personnel from the Sniper School and basic rifle marksmanship training performed by initial-entry soldiers. These activities illustrated the range of skills and methods used to ensure that soldiers are prepared for battle.

An additional highlight of the day was a lunch consisting of Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs). This lunch helped to dispel rumors about the taste of MREs and, at the same time, gave the team renewed respect for the soldier.

To put the infantry soldier into perspective, the PST visited Fort Benning's National Infantry Museum. As a final activity, the PST visited Andersonville, a prisoner-of-war camp from the Civil War. This was an enlightening and emotional experience for each PST member.

Conclusion

The Army Greening Program was an innovative training opportunity (attendees received Continuous Learning Points) and a good way to connect to soldiers on the ground. The following comments from participants illustrate the success of the 3-day Army Greening Program:

- "The trip was so impressive and outstanding. ... From indoctrination to specialized training, we watched civilians being shaped into our country's fighting elite (AIRBORNE)!"
- "The tremendous benefit to me was a newfound appreciation of the training facilities needed and the quality of troops



Participants receive an explanation of how a soldier is inspected before a jump.



Watching soldiers "fall" from the 250-foot tower

and training investment we (taxpayers and civil servants) put into them. ... The visit to Andersonville highlighted the ultimate sacrifices made generation after generation by our service men and women."

The team spent many hours talking about issues of concern to soldiers on the ground, including weight of weapon systems, lack of training funds, housing, and international relations. The program provided a great team-building exercise, and the team will never look at a soldier or C-130 aircraft in quite the same way again! **Hooah!**

MAJ MATTHEW T. RIORDAN is Program Integrator for the U.S. Army Multi-Purpose Individual Munition/Short Range Assault Weapon, the U.S. Army Target Acquisition Designation Sight/Pilot Night Vision Sensor, and the U.S. Marine Corps Predator Short Range Assault Weapon with the Defense Contract Management Agency assigned to Lockheed Martin in Orlando. He holds a B.S. in mathematics from the University of Florida and a master's in procurement and acquisition management from Webster University. Additionally, Riordan is Level III certified in contracting.
